

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

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NOTE: THE ICE FISHING REPORT WILL RESUME MARCH 11.

NEW PROGRAM WILL PROTECT VALUABLE HABITAT FOR SPECIES IN PERIL

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR received a first of its kind grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to further protect and enhance critical habitats to protect species listed as endangered, threatened or of special concern.

The Landowner Incentive Program is funded by a 3-year grant that will provide \$300,000 each year to provide cost share money to landowners that agree to protect and enhance habitats that harbor plants, birds, mammals, fish, butterflies or other species listed as threatened, endangered or of special concern. Highest priority will be given to Federally listed species. The DNR wildlife bureau had to match 25 percent of the grant in order to receive the money.

“I think this is going to be a great opportunity,” said Ken Herring, supervisor for the DNR’s private lands program. “The timing is right for Iowa to be involved in a program like this. This program is not tied to any farming practices or crop base, it is for all landowners who are looking to protect and enhance critical natural resource areas.”

Herring said the field staff will be working with landowners to try to identify where these species are found in Iowa and to then work with the landowner to improve and protect the habitat. “We are going to work to preserve and restore the rare and endangered populations rather than the more common species,” he said.

The program will provide 75 percent of the money to improve existing habitat on land hosting one or more of the listed species. Landowners will provide the remaining 25

percent, which, for example, could include the labor for restoration or by paying a contractor to do the improvements to the landscape.

“We have a lot of the technical assistance delivery in place with 25 private lands staff already in the field. We will be working with an additional 50 to 60 staff from fisheries, wildlife and forestry experts who will also be working with landowners on this project,” Herring said. It is also expected that other conservation groups will be interested in providing technical assistance to landowners.

This is a program designed for all uncommon species – the rare and often unnoticed plants, insects, reptiles, as well as species like the bald eagle.

There have been other programs focusing on threatened and endangered species, but the focus of those programs was generally acquiring land. The Landowner Incentive Program’s focus is working with landowners to improve the existing habitat that hosts these species.

Herring is targeting this fall to begin meeting with landowners about the program.

For more information, contact Herring at 515-281-5529.

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TROPHY ANTLERS

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

“The first thing I saw was just the tips of the antlers. They kept getting bigger and bigger,” recalls Richard Anderson. Hunting near Mount Pleasant during the 2001 shotgun season, Anderson, of Coralville, had just watched two does come over a rise. The telltale antlers of a big buck followed. “That’s when the heart starts racing and all that. I just tried to take a deep breath and pull off a shot. It was good enough to get him.”

A similar tale can be told thousands of times each season. The excitement of a whitetail coming into view, and hopefully into range, is a thrill for most hunters. When it’s a trophy-sized buck, it really packs a whallop. Anderson retold his as his nice-looking eight-point rack was scored last weekend. Certified scorers stretched the tape, marked the inches, noted the deductions, tallied the scores and listened as hunters gladly recounted how they and their trophy bucks, crossed each other’s paths.

“You have to imagine a parallel line between your skull plate here and your antlers,” pointed out Greg Harris. He and three other Department of Natural Resources wildlife biologists offered the free service at the Johnson County Conservation

Department's Kent Park, near Tiffin. Similar clinics are held throughout the state. Most are held 60 days or more after the close of Iowa's shotgun deer seasons. Just-taken whitetail antlers must 'dry' for that long, before being officially scored.

The scorers worked quickly, laying a flexible tape measure or lightweight cable between the antlers, then along the main beam, the rest of the tines—or points—and then around them to get circumference measurements. "It's all based on symmetry," explained Harris as he pointed out the process on another nice eight-pointer. "This one scored 129 1/8. It would have been better, but you see the G-1 point? The brow tine is broken off. Plus it has this little 'sticker' point. That's a deduction. His left G-4 point is a lot bigger, longer than his right G-4. That hurt it in this score. Other than that, it's a pretty well balanced rack."

Scoring standards are pretty rigid. That 129 is better than my pride and joy, 'Uncle Buck', the 10-pointer either my brother or I killed in our first deer season. Don't ask. It's another story altogether. Yet, it was still well short of the 150 minimum needed to register as a 'typical' Boone & Crockett (primarily firearm) trophy or the 135 for Pope & Young (archery) registries, recognized across North America. 'Non-typical' racks carry other point requirements. The owner must acknowledge the rack was taken legally to have it listed.

"All my buddies were like, 'oh yeah; yours is gonna go 150' and they wanted me to spend the money to get it mounted," laughed Anderson as he looked over the antlers and skull plate. His score? 141. Not bad at all; just not an 'official' trophy. "I've seen a lot of '150s', though and this wasn't one. But it was one of the best so far, in 15 years (of hunting)," he acknowledged.

Through the afternoon session, more racks came through. One hunter even went home for two caribou racks, when he learned that he could have them officially scored. Denny Hanson's 9-pointer came through at 141 7/8. Hanson, from Solon, took the buck on private ground, after it walked in from Shimek State Forest, in Lee County.

From Monticello, Craig Puffer brought in a 12-pointer, taken in November of 2001. "It was working a scrape under a tree," recalled Puffer. "I saw him, grunted and he walked right under my stand. It was a ten yard shot." His monster scored 145 3/8, even after 13 3/8 points were deducted. As a bow kill, it makes both the Pope & Young and the Iowa Trophy Buck registries.

Each of the rack came in with a different story. One rack—found by a farmer combining a field--featured 'swollen' bulbs halfway up four of the eight tines. Scorer Willy Suchy noted a crack inside the skull plate, evidence of an earlier injury. "That indicates a head injury at some point. The body remembers each year, when it's growing antlers. It likely showed up each year," explained Suchy.

Having that trophy—or near trophy—scored adds a little to the bragging rights, so to speak. But it also places a little more emphasis on the hunt itself; a good time

outdoors, with tall tales and tall tines to prove it. And it raises the bar a little. “I was 0 for 5 the first five years I hunted,” recalled Anderson. “Then steadily, they kept getting bigger. Maybe next year it will be bigger, so....”

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OUTDOOR EDUCATION WORKSHOPS SCHEDULED

DES MOINES – The Iowa DNR is sponsoring workshops for K –12 educators, scout leaders and other youth educators on Iowa’s outdoors.

Workshops are scheduled for March 15, from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., at the Dorothy Pecaut Nature Center, in Sioux City and for March 28, from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and March 29, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at the AEA 1, in Dubuque. Workshops are scheduled for April 5 and 12, from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Heartland AEA, in Johnston; for April 11, from 4:30 to 8: 30 p.m., April 12, from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. and April 29, from 4:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at Oak Grove Park, in Hawarden. Workshops will be held April 24, from 3 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Buena Vista University in Storm Lake; and for April 25, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. and April 26 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the AEA 1, in Elkader.

Educators will be introduced to several environmental activities through Project WILD, Aquatic WILD and Project Learning Tree. Participants will take home the manuals with Iowa supplements containing background information about Iowa’s resources and contact names.

“Participants need to dress for the weather and be prepared to do some activities outdoors, weather permitting,” said Barb Gigar, aquatic education coordinator for the DNR.

To register for the March 15 workshop, contact Dawn Chapman at 712-258-0838 or by e-mail at dchapman@sioux-city.org. People attending the workshop should bring a sack lunch. To register for the March 28 and 29 workshop, contact Peg Christensen at 563-556-3310 ext. 623 or 800-942-4668 or by e-mail at pchristensen@aea1.k12.ia.us. There is a \$25 cost for the materials, re-certification credit is available and participants should bring their own lunch.

To register for the April 5 and 12 workshop, contact Cindy Blobaum at 515-277-6110 or by e-mail at cindybb@juno.com for further details. To register for the April 11, 12 and 29 workshop, contact Sunday Ford at 712-552-3057 or by e-mail at soococon@acsnet.com. There is a \$15 fee for the Project Learning Tree material and graduate credit is available.

To register for the April 24 workshop, contact Kay Neumann at 712-683-5555 or by e-mail at dfarms@pronet.net. There is a \$15 fee for the Project Learning Tree materials. To register for the April 25 and 26 workshop, contact Peg Christensen at 563-566-3310 ext. 623 or 1-800-942-4668 or by e-mail at pchristensen@aea1.k12.ia.us. There is a \$25 fee for the materials and re-certification credit is available. People attending the workshop should bring a sack lunch.

Participants must register to attend the workshop. Information about the manuals is available at iowadnr.com. Go to fisheries and click on the education link.

Fish Iowa Workshops Scheduled

F.W. Kent Park, Oxford, April 5, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Contact Brad Freidhof at 319-645-2315 or by e-mail at conservation@co.johnson.ia.us. There is a \$7 fee for lunch.

For more information, contact Gigar at 641-747-2200.

American Wilderness Leadership School (AWLS)

AWLS 1

June 23 to 27, Springbrook Conservation Education Center, near Guthrie Center.

AWLS 2

July 28 to Aug. 1, Springbrook Conservation Education Center, near Guthrie Center.

For more information, contact AJay Winter at 641-747-8383.

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